
ANNUAL REPORT

OF

B. POPE BARTLETT, ESQ.,

Medical Officer of Health,

M E R E

RURAL SANITARY AUTHORITY.



PRESENTED 1900.



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Mere Rural Sanitary Authority.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

To the Chairman and Members of the Mere
District Council,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour to lay before you my report
as Medical Officer of Health for the year ending
December 31st, 1900,

DEATHS.

During the year 1900 the deaths registered in the district numbered 87, against 86 registered in the previous year. This is a slight increase on the average number per annum for the last ten years, viz., 85.6. These show a death-rate of 16.5 per 1,000 population, calculated on the census estimated to the middle of the year 1900. Of this number 4 (equal to .75 per 1,000 population and 33.8 per 1,000 births) were of children under one year of age, and 45 of persons 65 years of age and upwards.

According to the quarters of the year, the deaths were as follows:—

First quarter	...	...	39
Second quarter	...	...	22
Third quarter	...	...	11
Fourth quarter	...	...	15
			—
			87

There were 48 deaths of males and 39 of females.

BIRTHS.

118 births were registered in the district during the year a decrease of 19 on last year. This number is equal to an annual birth-rate of 22.4 per 1,000 population. 60 births were of males and 58 of females. Excess of births over deaths, 31.

MORTALITY FROM CERTAIN DISEASES.

Of the deaths classified according to their causes 36 were due to diseases of the chest, viz., 3 to phthisis, 12 to bronchitis, 2 to pneumonia, and 19 to heart disease. Heart disease appears to be the most common cause of death amongst the aged. There was one death from accident and one following an operation.

DEATHS FROM ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

43 cases of zymotic diseases were reported during the year and of these 4 died. 5 deaths occurred from measles making the total number of deaths from zymotic diseases 9. This number is equal to 1.707 per 1,000 population. The five deaths due to measles occurred one in Zeals in February, and 4 in the town of Mere in the months of March and April, when a severe epidemic was prevalent. Of the 4 deaths due to diphtheria, one occurred in Zeals and three in the town of Mere. Two deaths were attributed to influenza.

Subjects considered in the order laid down on page 2 of Dr. Power's Memorandum as requested by the Local Government Board.

(1) PHYSICAL FEATURES AND GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT.

The District of Mere consists of the town of Mere with a population of about 2,000 inhabitants, and of scattered parishes 9 in number with populations varying from 100 to 1,000. These are distributed over an area of 25,299 acres. The district is situated in the south-west corner of the county, and the country being hilly the villages are at different altitudes, the town of Mere being in a valley under the downs, whilst the village of East Knoyle is situated on very high land. The sub-soil varies considerably, in the valleys and more level portions it is usually either green sand or clay, and on the downs chalk. There are no streams of any size flowing through the district, the largest is the Stour which rises in Stourton, and a tributary of the same which rises near Mere and flows through that town.

(2) HOUSE ACCOMMODATION: Its Adequacy: Fitness for Habitation; Open Spaces about Houses and Cleanliness of Surroundings; Supervision over Erection of New Houses.

Owing to the general decrease of population due to emigration from rural districts, the number of houses in the district has been more than sufficient to accommodate the population, with the result that only the better constructed houses have as a rule been inhabited, many of the more dilapidated having been allowed to fall to pieces. The houses of the working classes, especially in villages where they are owned by the large landlords are generally in a very good state of repair, and are surrounded by suitable wash-houses and good gardens. During the year two cottages have been closed as unfit for habitation and two cleansed and lime-washed. Two new houses have also been erected. Your Council at present exercises no supervision over the erection of new houses, but I believe you contemplate adopting a by-law enabling you to do so.

(3) SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE: Its Sufficiency; Conditions of Sewers and House Drains; Methods of Disposal of Sewage; Localities where Improvements are needed.

Owing to the scattered nature of the houses in the district, only in a limited portion is a system of sewerage possible. There are two systems of any size, viz., one at Maiden Bradley, where a main sewer laid through the village is used to carry off the surface water and sewage from a few houses, and in the town of Mere where a system of sewerage and drainage is laid down. The latter is of considerable importance owing to its being closely connected with the epidemic of diphtheria which has prevailed in the town during the past year. This epidemic I attribute largely to two causes: (1) the defective state of the house drains and the insanitary manner in which they are connected with the main sewer. (2) The want of a sufficient supply of water at times to flush some portions of the main sewer. With regard to the first cause the opening up of several of the drains in houses where diphtheria had occurred, has clearly shown the careless manner in which the house drains have been laid, and the total absence of any attempt to prevent the escape of sewer gas from the sewers into the dwellings and their surroundings by a proper method of disconnection and ventilation. Many examples of defects discovered could be given, but it will be sufficient to point to the state of the drains as they existed at the British Schools, of which 13 scholars and teachers suffered from diphtheria. There the drains were discovered to be constructed of unsuitable pipes, laid with little or no fall, and on account of that and an insufficiency of water used in flushing, the drain was absolutely blocked with solid sewage. In this case a new drain was laid and all sanitary defects corrected. Much has been done during the past year to correct this state of affairs in the town of Mere, but much remains to be done. 21 house drains have been laid or re-laid, and 18 cleansed, trapped and ventilated. I shall speak of the flushing of the sewers under water supplies. The sewage of Mere is disposed of by precipitation of the solid portions in tanks situated some distance from the town, and the effluent, after passing over a small sewage farm, flows into the stream in a satisfactory state of purity.

(4) EXCREMENT DISPOSAL: System in Vogue; Defects.

In the town of Mere where there is a system of sewerage, the water closet is the most frequent method of disposal of excrement. There is however no general water supply, the closets as a rule being flushed with water carried by hand, a method not always satisfactory, as I have pointed out in previous reports. During the year 3 new water closets have been provided and 25 have

been repaired, etc. In the villages, cesspits are the rule, and these are often found in a most insanitary state, the pits being badly situated, defective in construction and sometimes overflowing. 38 of these have been repaired, including those used in the National Schools at Kilmington and Maiden Bradley, and 23 converted into pail closets. In all cases where possible we have recommended the conversion of the cess pits into pail closets and have now many of the latter in use. Ashes, vegetable refuse, etc., are generally disposed of by digging into the garden soil, but often these materials are allowed to accumulate near the dwelling until they become offensive. In 12 cases their removal has been ordered.

(6) WATER SUPPLY OF THE DISTRICT: Its Source; Nature; Sufficiency; Wholesomeness; Freedom from Pollution.

SOURCE.—In only one part of the district is a system of water works laid down, and that is in the village of Maiden Bradley, where excellent water is obtained from a spring about a mile from the village, and pumped to a reservoir whence it is distributed all over the village. With the exception of a small portion of Stourton all the rest of the district obtain their water from springs rising on the surface or from wells of various depths.

NATURE AND SUFFICIENCY.—The waters obtained from the springs and deep wells are usually very pure where means are taken to prevent contamination by surface leakage. The waters obtained from the shallow wells as at East Knoyle, and from the river, as in some cases at Mere, are either impure or liable at times to become contaminated, and are quite unfit for domestic use. In the case of East Knoyle your Council have been endeavouring during the past year to obtain a sufficient supply of good water for the village, and for that purpose have caused an experimental boring to be made, the value of which is at present being considered. I trust that during this year the matter will be settled and a good and sufficient supply obtained. With regard to the town of Mere, which is largely dependent for its water supply to that obtained from shallow wells, the state of affairs although better in many respects than it was formerly, cannot be regarded as altogether satisfactory. Considering the number of people living in the town and the close aggregation of a number of buildings, shallow wells, which are very liable to contamination are not a satisfactory source of water supply. Besides the necessity of a general supply of water of undoubted purity for domestic purposes, more water than is at present available is required to flush those portions of the sewers situated in the higher parts of the town, especially during the dry months of summer when the rain-fall is low. I believe the question of a general supply of water to the town

of Mere has received your attention, and I trust it will commend itself to your consideration. During the past year the water supply in other parts of the district has been generally satisfactory, and the samples of water I have analysed have proved wholesome in quality.

(7) PLACES OVER WHICH THE COUNCIL HAVE SUPERVISION: Factories; Bake-houses; Dairies, etc.

As there are no by-laws in force in the Mere district, and regulations under the Dairies and Cow-shed Orders have not been adopted, there have been no systematic inspections of these buildings. At the same time five buildings coming under the description of workshops and bake-houses have been inspected and put in a sanitary condition. I believe your Council are considering the question of adopting the Dairies and Cow-sheds Orders and as there is a large number of dairies in the district, sending immense quantities of milk to London and elsewhere, I am of opinion that such a step would be advisable and conducive to the general health both of the district, and for distant parts of the country.

(8) NUISANCES: Proceedings for their Abatement; Any remaining Unabated.

During the year there have been the usual forms of nuisances constantly requiring attention. The most common are accumulations of offensive materials, pig and cow manure, decaying vegetables, etc., foul cess pits, pigs kept too close to dwellings and water supplies, defective and choked drains, and overflows from farm yards. In most of the cases these have been abated on the Inspector pointing out the same to the owners, but in 22 cases it has been necessary to serve notices, 14 of which have been complied with and 8 remain unabated.

(9) METHODS OF DEALING WITH INFECTIOUS DISEASES: Notification; Isolation Hospital; Disinfection.

During the year 43 cases of infectious diseases were reported under the Notification Act. Of these 38 were cases of diphtheria, 36 of which occurred in Mere and Zeals, and one each in Kilmington and Maiden Bradley. There were two cases of scarlatina, two of erysipelas, and one of enteric fever, all of which occurred in Mere. Besides the above there was a severe epidemic of measles throughout Zeals, Stourton, Mere, and East Knoyle at the commencement of the year, necessitating the closing of the elementary schools in these parishes for a combined period of twelve weeks. When a case of infectious disease is re-

ported, the house is visited as soon as possible by the Sanitary Inspector, who sends me a report, on one of the forms recommended by the County Medical Officer of Health, giving the sanitary state of the premises, precautions taken to prevent the spread of the complaint, and steps taken to correct any sanitary defects. These reports are most valuable. On examining those of the 34 cases of diphtheria reported in the district during the year, I find that in 13 the children attended the British Schools at Mere and 5 the National Schools. In 16 cases the drains or traps were found defective, in 11 the closets were foul, and in five others serious sanitary defects were discovered. There is no isolation hospital in the district, the patients being isolated as far as possible in their own homes. Disinfectants are distributed freely to householders on whose premises infectious disease occurs, and on the medical man attending the case reporting it sufficiently recovered to allow of the house being disinfected, this process is carried out by the Inspector of Nuisances. I pointed out the difficulties of thorough and satisfactory disinfection in a recent report.

In conclusion I would state that I have made systematic inspections of the district during the past year, sometimes accompanied by the Inspector of Nuisances, and I cannot speak too highly of the efficient manner in which that officer has performed his duties.

Trusting you will consider this report for the past year satisfactory,

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

B. POPE BARTLETT,

Medical Officer of Health.

Bourton, January, 1901.

TABLE I.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		DEATHS UNDER 1 YEAR OF AGE.		DEATHS AT ALL AGES. TOTAL.		Deaths in Public Institutions.	Deaths of Non-residents registered in District.	Deaths of residents registered beyond District.	DEATHS AT ALL AGES. NETT.	
		Number.	Rate.	Number.	Rate per 1,000 Births registered.	Number.	Rate.				Number.	Rate.
1890	5812	130	22.3	10	76.9	92	15.8	10				
1891	5762	154	26.7	10	64.9	85	14.7	2				
1892	5659	137	24.2	20	145.9	131	23.3	15				
1893	5628	143	25.4	13	90.9	65	11.5	2				
1894	5596	160	28.5	12	75.0	83	14.8	5				
1895	5525	142	25.7	16	112.6	104	18.8	7				
1896	5502	161	29.1	14	86.9	75	13.6	4				
1897	5440	152	27.9	11	72.3	64	11.7	9				
1898	5408	131	24.2	7	53.4	71	13.6	5				
1899	5357	137	25.2	10	72.9	86	16.0	5				
Averages for years 189 -1899	5568	144	25.9	12.3	85.1	85.6	15.3	6.4				
1900	5264	118	22.4	4	33.8	87	16.5	7	1		86	16.3

Area of District in acres
(exclusive of area
covered by water). } 31,093

Total population at all ages5,762

Number of inhabited houses1,357

Average number of persons per house...4.24

} At Census
of 1891.

TABLE III.
Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1900.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.							TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED IN EACH LOCALITY.						
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.						Kilmington.	Knoyles.	Deverills.	Maiden Bradley.	Mere.	Sedgehill.	Stourton.
		Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards.							
Small-pox														
Cholera														
Diphtheria	38		11	21	3	3		1			1	36		
Membranous croup														
Erysipelas	2					1	1					2		
Scarlet fever	2		1	1								2		
Typhus fever														
Enteric fever	1				1							1		
Relapsing fever														
Continued fever														
Puerperal fever														
Plague														
Totals	43		12	22	4	4	1	1			1	41		

TABLE IV.

Causes of, and Ages at, Death during the Year 1900.

Causes of Death.	Deaths in whole District at subjoined ages.							Deaths in Localities (at all Ages.)							Deaths in Public Institutions
	All ages.	Under 1.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	Kilmington.	East & West Knoyle.	Kingston & Monkton Deverill.	Maiden Bradley.	Mere & Zeals.	Sedgehill.	Stourton.	
Small-pox ...															
Measles ...	5	1	2	2								5			
Scarlet Fever ...															
Whooping-cough ...															
Diphtheria and mem- branous croup ...	4		2	2								4			
Croup ...															
Fever { Typhus ...															
{ Enteric ...															
{ Other continued ...															
Epidemic influenza ...	2					1	1					1	1		
Cholera ...															
Plague ...															
Diarrhœa ...															
Enteritis ...															
Puerperal fever ...															
Erysipelas ...															
Other septic diseases ...															
Phthisis ...	3				1	2						2		1	1
Other tubercular diseases ...	1			1								1			
Cancer, malignant disease ...	5					2	3	1				3		1	
Bronchitis ...	12					2	10		2		1	9			1
Pneumonia ...	2	2										2			
Pleurisy ...															
Other diseases of Res- piratory organs ...														1	
Alcoholism ...															
Cirrhosis of liver ...	1					1									
Venereal diseases ...															
Premature birth ...															
Diseases and accidents of parturition ...															
Heart diseases ...	19					11	8		6	4	2	7			
Accidents ...	1			1								1			
Suicides ...															
After operation ...	1					1						1			
All other causes ...	31	1	1		1	5	23		10	2	2	13	2	2	5
All causes ...	87	4	5	6	2	25	45	1	18	6	5	49	3	5	7